

LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

LANDMARK NAME: Randolph and Virginia West House

OWNERS: Michael and Laura Umansky

APPLICANTS: Same

LOCATION: 2245 Dryden Road - Southgate

AGENDA ITEM: II.B

HPO FILE NO: 13L280

DATE ACCEPTED: 05/01/2013

HAHC HEARING: 05/16/2013

SITE INFORMATION

TRS 2 & 3A, Block 9, Southgate, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The site includes a historic, one-story, stucco single family residence

TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED: Landmark Designation

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The Randolph and Virginia West House was designed in a French style by Claude E. Hooton in 1936-37. Virginia West was an accomplished interior decorator and Mr. West was a building contractor. The new home was featured in *Architectural Digest* and *The Houston Post*. Claude E. Hooton was a Rice-trained architect who had a successful and long career, and built several homes in Southgate. Architectural historian Stephen Fox wrote the following about Claude Hooton's architecture: "*A number of Hooton's houses, including his own, reflected his exposure to modern architecture. Others, however, were more conservative in design. They were all characterized by diminutive proportions.*"

The Randolph and Virginia West House meets criteria 1, 4, 5, 6, and 8 for Landmark Designation.

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

The Randolph and Virginia West House is significant for its architectural style, its architect, and its first owners. The home has been well maintained over the years and the new owners are also undertaking a sympathetic remodeling to accommodate their family.

Rudolph and Virginia West

Virginia Johnson West was the daughter of Thomas and Nell Easton Johnson. She was born March 11, 1902. Thomas Johnson was a successful cotton broker in Houston who died in the early 1920s. His widow, Nell Easton Johnson, commissioned Joseph Northrop to design a home for her at 3 Shadowlawn Circle. She, Virginia, and Virginia's husband, Randolph West, resided there together until the Wests moved to the home on Dryden.

Virginia West was a successful interior designer in Houston. She worked with Eugene Harris (a Rice graduate) in Houston. She died on June 30, 1972. Randolph West was a civil engineer. He was born on December 18, 1897 in Savannah, Georgia. He died March 7, 1965. The Wests were living in Kettering Oaks subdivision at the time of his death. His funeral was at Palmer Memorial Episcopal Church. Both Wests were buried at Glenwood Cemetery in the Johnson family plot.

Claude E. Hooton

Claude E. Hooton was born in Waterproof, Louisiana, in 1905. His family moved to Houston, and Hooton enrolled in architecture school at the Rice Institute. He graduated in 1928, and embarked on a traveling fellowship to Europe, where he became exposed to Modern architecture in Finland.

He was a student of William Ward Watkin, and joined up with the Watkin family in France, where Mrs. Watkin was seriously ill. He took charge of the Watkin's sons tutoring during this time, and when Mrs. Watkin died, he accompanied the family back to Houston. He then became an instructor at Rice, and eventually became a full-time faculty member. He designed numerous homes in Houston in the 1930s.

Stephen Fox's notes on Claude E. Hooton contain the following passage:

During the Houston phase of his career, Hooton was principally a designer of houses, several of which were located in the Southgate subdivision adjoining the Rice campus, where Hooton built his own house [now demolished]. A number of Hooton's houses, including his own, reflected his exposure to modern architecture. Others, however, were more conservative in design. They were all characterized by diminutive proportions.

This was the case with the West House, which is tiny in scale but large in character. Several homes along University Boulevard are also distinguishable as Hooton designs.

Hooton was married to Callie Clemons and they had three children. Hooton left Houston and Rice in 1941 to take an appointment with the Merchant Marines in New Orleans. He remained in the New Orleans area for the remainder of this architectural career, but kept an office in Houston during the 1950s and 1960s.

While in New Orleans, Hooton was involved with a number of significant projects, including the Texas Company Building (1953) and was the associate architect for Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill's Pan American Life Insurance Company Building (1952).

Hooton's son, Claude E. Hooton, Jr., married Elizabeth Sharp, the daughter of Houston developer Frank W. Sharp. Sharp is best known as the developer of Sharpstown. Sharp hired Hooton to design the Sharpstown Center (1961) with Sidney H. Morris & Associates and the Sharpstown State Bank Building (1962).

Claude E. Hooton died in Natchez, Mississippi, on October 15, 1993.

Among Hooton's Houston residential projects from the 1930s are the following:

1935:

Central City Corporation House, 4917 Crawford (no longer extant)
Earl McKaughan House, 3706 Harper (no longer extant)
1118 S. Shepherd

1935-36:

J.E. Cooper House, 2247 Dryden (with Hiram Salisbury and H.D. Maddox)
Claude E. Hooton House, 2233 University Boulevard (no longer extant)

2153 University Boulevard, house for R.W. Gillette (no longer extant)
2163 University Boulevard, house for R.W. Gillette
2171 University Boulevard, house for R.W. Gillette
2247 University Boulevard, house for R.W. Gillette (no longer extant)
Vivia and Claude A. Hooton House, 2207 Dryden (no longer extant)
A.L. Young House, 2126 Pine Valley

1936:

Roy Cox House, 2235 University Boulevard
Chester F. Lee House, 2118 Glen Haven Boulevard

1936-37:

Rebecca Henry Duplex, 1639 Branard

1938:

W.M. Merritt House, 2814 Arbor (street cannot be found)

1939:

J.R. Parten House, 3363 Knollwood Drive (no longer extant)
R.E. McKaughan House, 2110 Pine Valley
W.W. Fondren, Jr, House, 3619 Knollwood Drive

RESTORATION HISTORY AND CONDITION

The 1,409 square foot house is sited facing north in the center of a 7,068 square foot lot. The white house is low slung and has a diminutive stature which contrasts with the steep pointed roof. The brick-faced house is symmetrical, and designed in a French style. The one-story house features three bays, a center entrance bay with symmetrical flanking bays.. The two outer bays are topped by hipped roofs and central bay is topped by a truncated hipped roof, which makes them seem pyramidal from the street. The house was engineered with a concrete slab and concrete walls, unusual for its time.

The center entrance bay is recessed, and along with low walls (which were original to the landscaping and design) forms a patio in the front. Unfortunately, these patio walls have been removed due to flooding issues. However, the character of the entry mostly remains. The entry is topped with a large arch which encroaches into the roof forming a dormer. Tall, double, wood doors form the entry. Two vertically elongated octagonal windows are on each side of the entry.

Each flanking bay has a 9-over-9 wood sash window. These windows are new, but replicate what was there before.

Two thin chimneys punctuate the roofs where the two outer bays connect to the center bay.

The home's original interior (since modified many times) was detailed in *Architectural Digest*. A copy of that article has been attached to this application.

2245 Dryden is currently undergoing a renovation to accommodate the new owner, who is also an interior designer. All of the exterior windows and doors have been replaced, although the original front door will remain. The new windows match the design and profile of the existing windows.

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Planning and Development Department

The roof was also replaced. The existing garage/guesthouse was removed. A 20x60', 925 square foot, one-story addition was added at the rear of the structure (over the location of the former garage/guesthouse). The addition does not significantly alter the house's historic material or original floor plan. See drawing for more detail.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

City Directories

Nicholson, Patrick J. *William Ward Watkin and the Rice Institute*. Houston, Texas: Gulf Publishing Company, 1991.

Notes on Claude E. Hooton

"Randolph West," *Houston Chronicle*, March 8, 1965.

"Residence of Mr. and Mrs. Randolph West, Houston, Texas." *Architectural Digest*, Vol. 10, No. 4: 29-32.

Various Resources from Ancestry.com

1956 AIA Historical Directory

1962 AIA Historical Directory

*Note: no obituary was found for Claude Hooten or Virginia Johnson West

The information and sources provided by the applicant for this application have been reviewed, verified, edited and supplemented with additional research and sources by Matthew Kriegl Planning and Development Department, City of Houston.

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APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION

Sec. 33-224. Criteria for designation

(a) The HAHC, in making recommendations with respect to designation, and the city council, in making a designation, shall consider one or more of the following criteria, as appropriate for the type of designation:

S	NA	S - satisfies	D - does not satisfy	NA - not applicable
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AND

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(9) If less than 50 years old, or proposed historic district containing a majority of buildings, structures, or objects that are less than 50 years old, whether the building, structure, object, site, or area is of extraordinary importance to the city, state or nation for reasons not based on age (Sec. 33-224(b)).
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STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission recommend to City Council the Landmark Designation of the Randolph and Virginia West House at 2245 Dryden Road.

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EXHIBIT A

PHOTO

Randolph and Virginia West House
2245 Dryden Road



EXHIBIT B
SITE LOCATION MAP
Randolph and Virginia West House
2245 Dryden Road

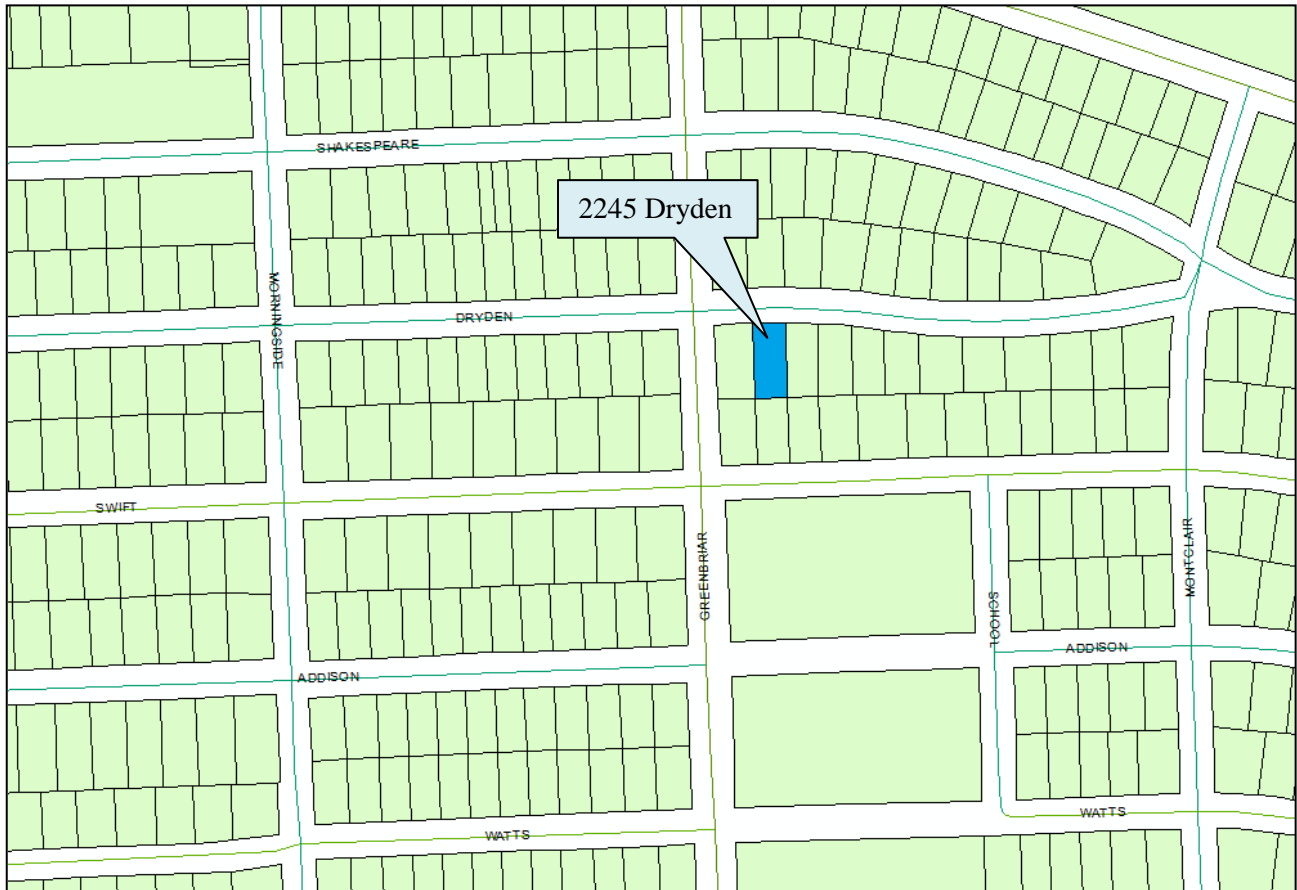


EXHIBIT C ADDITION FLOOR PLANS

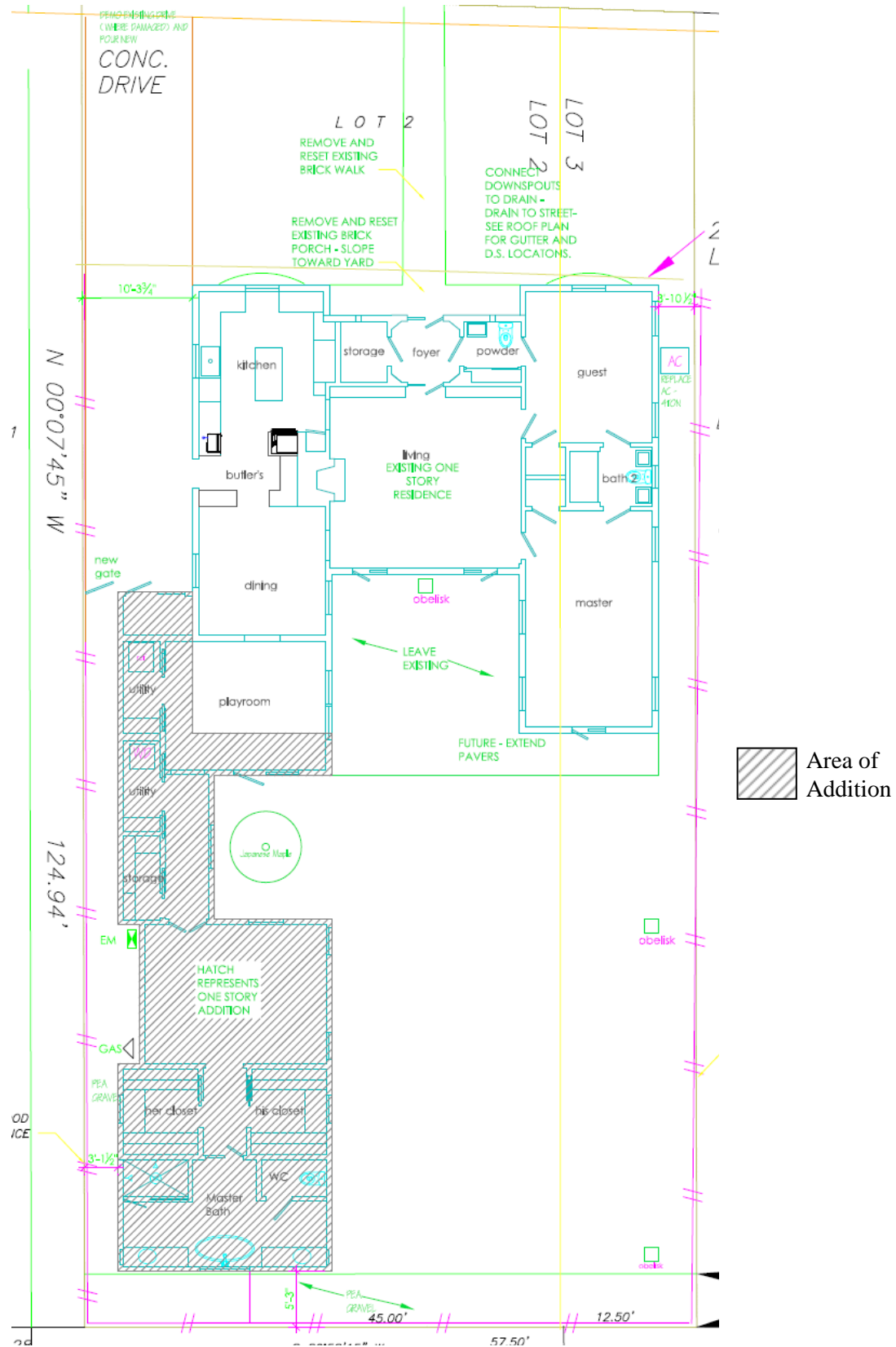


EXHIBIT D
ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST ARTICLE



Photos Maynard L. Parke

Front Elevation

Residence of Mr. and Mrs. Randolph West, Houston, Texas

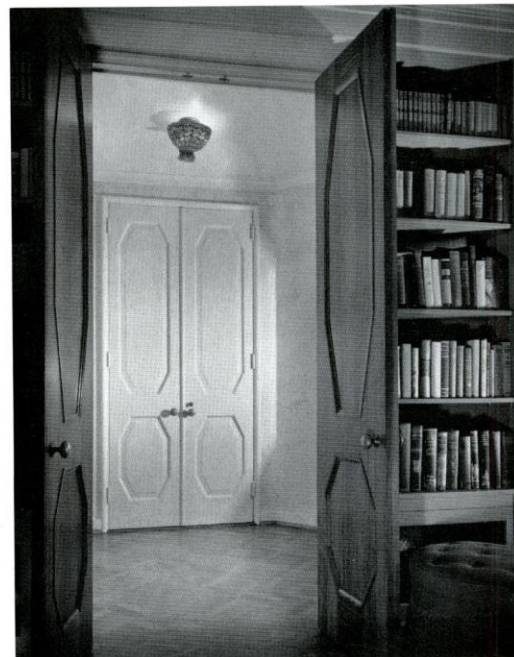
Interiors by EUGENE HARRIS and VIRGINIA WEST

RANDOLPH WEST, Builder

Window Sash and French Doors: Sugar Pine



Entrance Hall



THE ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST



Dining Room

Residence of Mr. and Mrs. Randolph West, Houston, Texas

Interiors by EUGENE HARRIS and VIRGINIA WEST

RANDOLPH WEST, Builder



Living Room

Residence of
Mr. and Mrs. Randolph West,
Houston, Texas

Interiors by EUGENE HARRIS and VIRGINIA WEST
RANDOLPH WEST, Builder



Living Room



Bed Room



Residence of Mr. and Mrs. Randolph West, Houston, Texas

Interiors by EUGENE HARRIS and VIRGINIA WEST

RANDOLPH WEST, Builder



Bed Room

Dressing Room